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THE
CAMBRO - BRITON.

NOVEMBER, 1821.

NULLI QUIDEM MIHI SATIS ERUDITI VIDENTUR, QUIBUS NOSTRA
IGNOTA SUNT. *CICERO de Legibus.*

RETRO-PROSPECTIVE ADDRESS,

THE resumption of the CAMBRO-BRITON, after a pause of five months, seems to invite, if not to require, a review of those principles upon which the work was at first undertaken : nor will a recurrence to the origin of our labours be more apposite to the occasion, than a prospective glance at that course which it is our wish hereafter to pursue. The past and future being thus brought under the same view, the reader will be able to judge how far we have redeemed the pledges of the one, or in what manner we propose to fulfil the hopes of the other ; nor will it be less satisfactory to ourselves to know, in what way we have executed a task, that was undertaken with an ardour, of which we can affirm, at least, that we now feel no diminution. On the contrary, like a refreshed traveller, after a period of invigorating repose, we continue our journey with an anticipation of new enjoyment from the remainder of our career.

Such of our readers, as have kindly accompanied us from the goal at which we started, cannot, we hope, have forgotten the objects, which were more especially contemplated in the establishment of the CAMBRO-BRITON ; but, as others, who peruse this, may not have had the same opportunity, it may be of use briefly to recapitulate the general nature of our design. It had often occurred to us as a subject of surprise, and indeed of regret, that the various treasures of learning and genius, and those for the most part of high antiquity, for which Wales has been so long famed, were not more generally known to the literary world ; and that the cultivation of the language itself, remarkable as it is for so many excellencies, should be confined within its own mountain barriers. To atone, in some degree, for a neglect, with which our countrymen might too justly be charged in this instance, was the principal incentive to our undertaking ; and the objects, we proposed to ourselves,

were necessarily in accordance with this main purpose. The translation of our ancient remains, whether of prose or poetry—historical, biographical, and antiquarian researches,—with illustrative dissertations on the Welsh tongue,—became, naturally, the paramount aim of our labours; and to these we were desirous of adding such notices of modern literature, connected with the Principality, as might conduce to the accomplishment of our general views.

Such were the prominent features of our plan at the commencement of this work; and we may refer, with some confidence, to the past, for proofs of the fidelity with which we have adhered to our original purpose. If, indeed, all has not been done, that may have been expected, it has been chiefly, we hope, because the limits, to which we have as yet been confined, have been unequal to the full variety of the subject. Much, however, we trust, will still be found to have been achieved. A translation, and the first in any thing like a complete form, has been supplied of those interesting and valuable memorials of ancient times, the Historical Triads, as well as of a considerable portion of the “Triads of Wisdom,” and of the “Wisdom of Catwg,” both of them remarkable for the concentration of that aphoristic knowledge, which distinguished the bardic lore of the Cymry. The Welsh language, not more respectable for its antiquity than for its innate and inexhaustible resources of beauty and energy, has been vindicated in many of its most important properties, through much undoubtedly remains to be effected towards a complete exhaustion of this fertile topic. Some account has been given of the lives and writings of our more ancient and more celebrated bards; while the effusions of others, both ancient and modern, together with a copious selection of those national stanzas, known by the name of *Pemillion*, have been published, accompanied by such poetical versions, as the peculiar characteristics of the Welsh muse enabled us to supply. An English translation of the renowned Laws of Hywel has also been commenced; and several new publications, some of them of remarkable merit, have received a critical notice. Some original letters, of considerable interest to the lovers of Welsh literature, have also been made public, together with many valuable illustrations, from the pens of various intelligent correspondents, of the antiquities, history, music, topography, and

miscellaneous literature of the Principality. Such, in a word, are the general features of the two volumes of the CAMBRO-BRITON already before the world, to say nothing of their less important contents; and we hope we shall not be accused of any undue share of national exultation, or, what we should much more regret, of any overweening conceit of our own exertions, if we refer to them as containing satisfactory evidence of those literary treasures of ancient times, which we originally claimed as the property of our native hills.

From the past it is now time to turn to the contemplation of the future; and this we do with a satisfaction, which the enlarged size of the work, and the consequent accession of facilities for the cultivation of its peculiar objects, may naturally be supposed to communicate. Our original design, indeed, as far as it regards Wales, remains unaltered, because we deem it incapable of any material amendment: the same national topics, the same interesting relics of former days, will still be the objects of our pursuit. But, although in its essential characteristics the same, the work, in its exterior form and plan, as well as in its minor details, may be found open to some improvement; and we have only on this point to observe, that whatever suggestions may offer themselves in this respect will immediately be adopted.

Our primary views, in so much as Wales is concerned, remain, as we have already stated, unchanged; but we feel an anxiety, and, we trust, not without the prospect of its gratification, to embrace, within the scope of our work, an attention to the interests of CELTIC LITERATURE in general. Wales, indeed, as hitherto, must occupy the fore-ground of the scene; but there is no reason why other nations, of the same family, may not find an occasional niche in the perspective. Brittany, Scotland, and Erin, claim a kindred descent, and an alliance, of greater or less proximity, in their respective languages. The primitive characteristics of these countries, and their literary peculiarities, as connected with their national tongues, cannot be foreign to the purpose of the CAMBRO-BRITON, but must, on the contrary, tend greatly to elucidate those inquiries, to which it is more immediately appropriated. The Celtic scholar, of whatever nation, will, therefore, always find in the pages of this work, a hearty welcome, as well as a congenial repository of the lucubrations with which he may favour us.

We might here close our *prospective* remarks, and, with them, our ADDRESS, were we not desirous of offering a few words in defence of a peculiarity, which will, in future, distinguish the CAMBRO-BRITON, and which, although not affecting its general plan, is of sufficient moment, perhaps, to justify this prefatory notice. We allude to the substitution, in all Welsh words, of the *v* and *f* for the *p* and *ff*, so preposterously introduced, and so obstinately retained, in our modern orthography. At what time this unmeaning corruption had its origin we are not precisely aware; nor is the fact of much importance, since it is well known, that it was, at first, an innovation upon the early mode of writing the Welsh tongue. This is a circumstance familiar to all persons acquainted with our ancient MSS., as well as our earliest printed books*. The introduction of the *v* and *f* into the CAMBRO-BRITON is, therefore, to be regarded only as a restoration of the ancient and proper orthography, and as being, moreover, in strict conformity with the usage of other languages, and with the most obvious suggestions of reason. That the letter *p* should ever have usurped the sound of *v* is itself a sufficient anomaly; but, that the last mentioned letter, so appropriately and so generally adopted, should have been wantonly expelled from the Welsh tongue, is an absurdity too gross for any rational solution. Yet, such is the fact; and the inveteracy of the abuse is now, unfortunately, too strong a security for its continuance. It will be obvious, however, we trust, to every reader of candour, that, in abandoning, after a mature reflection, this common error, we are so far contributing to remove from the appearance of our language the orthographical deformities with which it has too justly been charged. And, in a work, expressly designed to promote a cultivation of the Welsh tongue amongst those who are now strangers to it, it becomes us peculiarly to adopt, as far as may be, the orthographical analogies of other languages, and especially where that may be done, as in this instance, by the renunciation of a practice avowedly corrupt and indefensible.

* Among other early publications in the Welsh language, the first edition of the Welsh Bible, we believe, retained the use of the letter *v*, which was also sanctioned by the celebrated Mr. Llwyd, in his *Archæologia Britannica*, notwithstanding the injudicious example set by Dr. Davies, both in his Grammar and Dictionary, and who, as far as our present recollection serves us, was the first to give any sort of authority to the corruption of which we are speaking. See more on this subject in the second volume of the CAMBRO-BRITON, p. 325.—ED.